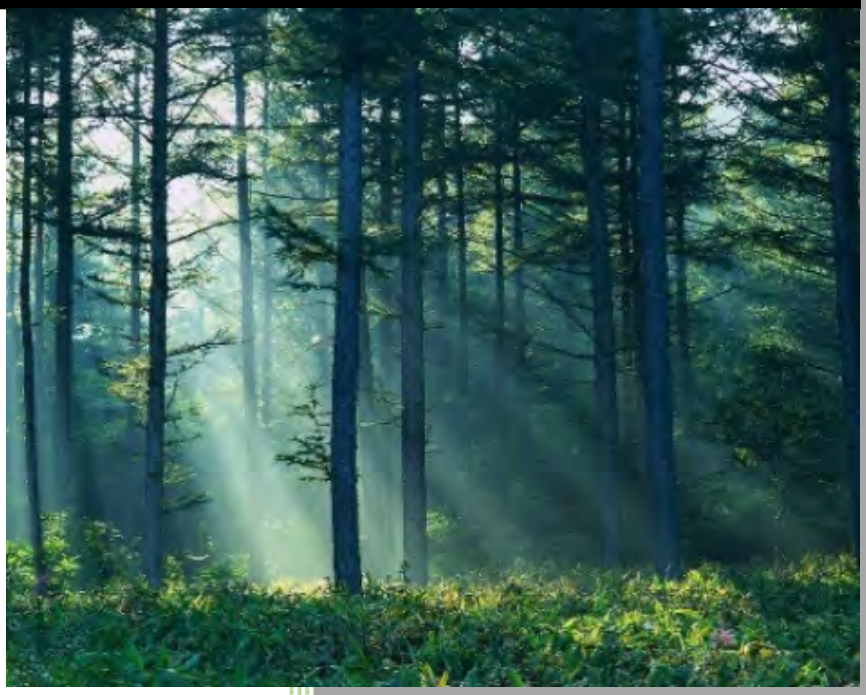
Mantram Repetition Program

Instructor Guide



All Purpose Manual

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Class 1: Introduction to Mantram Repetition

Purpose

- Introduce an overview of Mantram Repetition course including Group Rules
- Describe characteristics of the relaxation response – opposite of the stress response
- Emphasize the importance of using a mantram when it is not needed

Objectives

By the end of this session, the group members will be able to:

1. State how this program teaches the training of attention
2. List Group Rules
3. State class requirements
4. Describe the origins of this program
5. Define a mantram, how to choose and use it

Materials

- Pens – Black ink only
- Nametags and markers
- *Strength in the Storm* book
- *Mantram Repetition Program All Purpose Manual*
- (Optional) PowerPoint Orientation Presentation or handouts on presentation
- (Optional) Laptop computer, LCD projector
- (Optional) Flip chart or white board

Agenda

Activity 1: Introduction and Group Rules and Requirements-Confidentiality
Activity 2: Three Assumptions/Philosophy of the Program
Activity 3: Pre-course Evaluation
Activity 4: Orientation to Mantram Repetition Program (MRP)
Activity 5: Review Course Manual and *Strength in the Storm*
Activity 6: Closing, Homework and Experiments

Activity 1 — 10-15 minutes

INTRODUCTION AND GROUP RULES & REQUIREMENTS: CONFIDENTIALITY

Methods: Group Introductions led by facilitators, provide Group Rules – confidentiality with no side talking

NOTE: Instructor may write these on the board, or have a printed sheet to hand out on these Group Rules.

1. **Group Rules:**
   a. Come on time
   b. Notify instructors if you cannot attend or will be late to class
   c. Be supportive of each other. Be constructive
   d. Allow equal time for participants. PLEASE, no side bar discussions
   e. If you would rather not participate, just say, "I'll pass"
   f. Have only one person talk at a time
   g. No cell phones or pagers – please turn them off
   h. No food; drinks in covered containers
   i. Do the homework
   j. Practice "confidentiality." To build trust, we must agree that all group discussion stays in the group out of respect for each other. As healthcare providers, we are mandated by the State of California to report any child/elder abuse concerns and if we have concerns for a person's safety.
   k. Let instructor(s) know if you have any suggestions or concerns
2. Introductions: (*start with yourself as a model but make it very short*)
   a. Introduce themselves, first name
   b. Title or role at job or in family
   c. Describe one reason for taking the course
   d. How did you hear about the program?
   e. Write down why participant wants to learn mantram repetition

REMEMBER: DO NOT SPEND A LOT OF TIME ON ANY ONE PERSON

3. Show participants the first few pages of the course manual and review how it will be used for class and homework

Activity 2 — 5 minutes

THREE ASSUMPTIONS/PHILOSOPHY OF THE PROGRAM

1. All human beings have mind, body and spirit with inner spiritual resources:
   a. Spiritual resources refer to the highest qualities or characteristics that every human being is capable of experiencing – such as love, kindness, wholeness, compassion, joy, peace, etc. We believe these are inner resources that can be accessed when the mind is

calm.

b. This program differentiates between spirituality and religion. These terms mean different things to different people but in this program, we encourage tolerance/ acceptance of all belief systems. We do not endorse religious dogma or force anyone else's beliefs onto you. Rather, we invite everyone to bring their own beliefs to the program. This is a "come as you are" party and all are welcome.

c. Some people have had bad experiences with religion or religious groups and therefore, we tend to focus more on what we call "spirituality," which endorses a more personal view or search for the sacred meaning and purpose in life.

2. We are unaware of our inner calm because of inability to quiet our mind (show Model on p. 25 of the course manual.)
3. Training attention using mantram quiets the mind to tap inner spiritual resources.

Activity 3 — 10 minutes
PRE-COURSE EVALUATION (Skip if participating in research)

Hand out the pre-course evaluation form. Make sure everyone fills one out and turns it in to you before the end of the class. Please check to see that all the questions are answered. Say something like "This is an opportunity for you to do a self-assessment and for me to know you better."

Activity 4 — 40-50 minutes
ORIENTATION TO MANTRAM REPETITION PROGRAM (OPTIONAL USING POWERPOINT PRESENTATION)

Methods: PowerPoint Presentation or Review of the Course Manual

1. Go over the course manual including: (go over the manual at the end of class if using a PowerPoint presentation)
   - Mantram Stories (read one or two)
   - Table of Contents
   - Weekly Objectives
   - Reading Assignments
2. Welcome and Introductions. Starting with one's self (Name; title or role at job/family; reason to taking course; how did you hear about this program)
3. Purpose of the Mantram Repetition Program (MRP) – Training the Attention
   - "We can't control what life sends us, but we can have a say in how we respond. The secret is the mind. And it is the mind that feels agitated, stressed, pressured, helpless, or anxious. It is the mind that can learn to stay calm, resourceful, compassionate, and effective. Everything depends on our state of mind – the one thing in life we can do something about" (*Strength in the Storm* [*SITS*]: p. 15).
4. Philosophy of the Program/Assumptions
5. What is mantram? Why do you call it a "mantram" instead of "mantra"? We teach "mantram repetition" according to the guidelines of a spiritual teacher who uses the original Sanskrit spelling, which is "mantram." It is a gender-neutral term meaning "to cross

the mind," and refers to traditional, spiritually-based words or phrases. The term "mantra" has become secularized in our popular culture referring to almost anything that is repeated. We use "mantram" to make a distinction and honor the original usage of the word. If the word "mantram" is awkward or foreign to you, call it something else: cue word, rapid focus tool, prayer word, centering tool, comfort word. "It gives you something to hold on to so that you can steady yourself in confusing circumstances[/situations] until your thoughts become clear" (*SITS*: p. 19).

- Other descriptions of mantram repetition. Ghandi says, "The mantram becomes a personal staff of life and carries one through every ordeal."
- Introduce Eknath Easwaran, our spiritual teacher/guide – "the key to facing life challenges…is the mental state with which we meet them" (*SITS*: p. 9).
- Differentiate with sitting meditation
- Mantra – popularized secular term and give example
- Examples of mantrams – see list of mantrams in the course manual (p. 10)
- Origins of MRP at the VA

6. Mantram and Stress
   a. 2 main causes for stress:
      (1) Too much to do
      (2) Too little time
   b. Leads to a busy mind
7. "Relaxation response" by Dr. Herbert Benson and techniques to reduce stress
8. How to choose and use a mantram including how it is taught and phases of practice
9. When to use and not use the mantram
   "Why do you call it "rapid" relaxation response?
   - We use the word "rapid" because mantram repetition is seconds away and can be accessed and applied immediately in any situation, anywhere, anytime. It is "rapidly" available.
10. Closing, homework for the next week
11. Questions – Stay after class to assist those with further questions

Activity 5 — 5 minutes
REVIEW COURSE MANUAL AND STRENGTH IN THE STORM

Methods: Lecture/Question and Answers

1. Turn to p. vi in the course manual. Review homework instructions for each class meeting. Make sure class understands that there are assignments in the *Strength in the Storm (SITS)* book and in the course manual. Have class enter dates in their course manual on p. vi.
2. Ask them to write out "Situations, Symptoms or Behaviors you would like to manage better" and bring to class (this assignment is on p. 11 of the course manual).
3. Ask everyone to review the list of mantrams on p. 10 of the course manual, choose a mantram and practice repeating a mantram.

Activity 6 — 5 minutes
CLOSING, HOMEWORK AND EXPERIMENTS

1. Provide facilitator contact information so participant can call to cancel/questions.
2. Complete exercise on p. 11 and reading assignment for next week from:
   a. Course manual, Chapters 1 & 2
   b. *Strength in the Storm*, pp. 7-34 (Chapter 1: "Strength in the Storm") and pp. 82-107 (Chapter 4: "Nourish the Mind")
3. Remind participant to bring their course manual every week
4. Tell them the class with be in the form of a circle and group discussion next time
5. Return Pre-course Evaluations for completion as needed
6. Stay around for a few minutes to answer questions and clean up

Class 2: Choosing, Using, and Tracking Mantram Practice

Purpose

- To review "Group Rules"
- To discuss choosing, using and tracking mantram practice
- To describe barriers and resistance to choosing a mantram
- To emphasize importance of ultimately keeping the same mantram
- To describe best times when to use and NOT to use a mantram
- To emphasize the importance of using a mantram when it is not needed
- To emphasize the importance of repeating the mantram when relaxed

Objectives

By the end of this session, the group members will be able to:

1. Choose and begin using a mantram
2. Identify times to use a mantram
3. Identify times when NOT to use a mantram
4. Describe three stages of mantram practice
5. Experience mantram repetition during class for 5 minutes
6. Identify a list of annoying things as times to use a mantram

Materials

- Chalk board, eraser board, or flip chart to write on
- Set the room with chairs in a circle so all can see each other
- Nametags
- Small bell or chime to end mantram repetition practice session
- Course manual with exercise of "My List of Annoying Things"

Agenda

(Post this Agenda at the beginning of class)
Introduction to Group Rules
Activity 1: Welcome and Review Group Rules
Activity 2: Choosing a Mantram: Successes or Any Obstacles
Activity 3: Barriers to Choosing a Mantram
Activity 4: Stages of Mantram Practice
Activity 5: Practice Mantram Repetition in Class
Activity 6: When to Use and Not Use a Mantram
Activity 7: List of Annoying Things/Situations I Want to Handle Better (p. 18)
Activity 8: Using a Counter and Tracking Logs
Activity 9: Closing, Homework and Experiments

Activity 1 — 10 minutes
WELCOME AND REVIEW GROUP RULES

Methods: Presentation and Discussion

NOTE: Instructor may write these on the board, or have a printed sheet to hand out on these Group Rules.

Group Rules:

1. Come on time
2. Notify instructors if you cannot attend or will be late to class
3. Be supportive of each other. Be constructive
4. Allow equal time for participants. PLEASE, no side bar discussions
5. If you would rather not participate, just say, "I'll pass"
6. Have only one person talk at a time
7. No cell phones or pagers – please turn them off
8. No food; drinks in covered containers
9. Do the homework
10. Practice "confidentiality." To build trust, we must agree that all group discussion stays in the group out of respect for each other
11. Let instructor(s) know if you have any suggestions or concerns

Ask participants if they had any reactions to or questions from the reading.

[**NOTE:** Encourage participation of all class members. Not more than 3-5 minutes should ever be spent on one person. Be aware that some people may not have chosen a word/mantram and may be reluctant to share. Emphasize the difficulty of wanting to choose the "right" one and fear of making a mistake. Let people know they do not have to share what their mantram is, unless they want to.]

Activity 2 — 20 minutes
CHOOSING A MANTRAM: SUCCESSES OR ANY OBSTACLES

Methods: Presentation, Group Discussion, and Group Exercise

1. Ask each person: ***(start with yourself as a model but make it very short)***
   a. How many have selected a mantram?
   b. "Tell us how you decided to choose a mantram."
   c. "Describe any problems that you encountered."
   d. "Did anyone feel that a mantram chose them? Did any words jump out at you?"
2. "If there were problems choosing a mantram, what are some ideas on how to resolve the problem?" "Let's do some brainstorming."
3. "Are any of these ideas helpful? Which one(s)?"
4. Ask by a show of hands: "Has anyone ever had a similar problem in making decisions in the past?"

"If you are experiencing problems with picking a mantram, just select one for now so you can practice and use it."
4. Brainstorm: "Let's hear some ideas that might help solve this problem."

REMEMBER: DO NOT SPEND A LOT OF TIME ON ANY ONE PERSON.
AFTER TWO OR THREE "YES BUTS," GO ON TO THE NEXT PERSON.

Activity 3 — 20 minutes
BARRIERS TO CHOOSING A MANTRAM

Method: Presentation

1. "Some people want to make up their own mantram words. We don't recommend this because the underlying power of a mantram lies in its sound being repeated in the mind. A theory is the sound can resonate within. There is something special about mantram words/phrases because these have been handed down through the generations."
2. "Some mantram words are in another language and it isn't necessary that you think of the meaning every time you repeat it. The meaning of the word will sink into your consciousness whether you think of its meaning or not. In fact, if you try to think of the meaning, that may become a distraction. Just repeat it without trying to understand it."
3. "Because you ultimately want to choose a word that you keep for the rest of your life, this is the time to practice and see if you find something that "fits" for you. Sometimes people have too many choices and they can't make up their mind. Other people can't find any words that seem right. When in doubt, we recommend using the mantram of Mahatma Ghandi—'Rama Rama,' which means joy within."
4. **ANALOGY OF CHANGING MANTRAM Story:**
"The mantram is like a drill and you use it to break the soil to reach the water. If you stop and change your mantram to a different word, it is like moving your drill to a different place and starting all over in digging the well. Each time you change your mantram, you are starting over. That's why it is important to eventually choose one mantram and stick with it, so you can reach your goal." (Use the model on p. 25 to depict this process.)
5. "Whenever you have doubts or begin feeling skeptical, use the energy of your skepticism to focus more on repeating the mantram. Eventually, you will 'break through' your doubts."

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about Mantram Repetition

Why do I have to choose a mantram from a list? Why can't I make up my own?
When you select a traditional mantram from our recommended list, you are assured that it has been used by many people in a special way. This is like having a concentrated product that has weathered the test of time. These spiritual mantram words come with "extra value" because of past associations with higher power/prayerful thinking/being.

Also, the purpose of mantram repetition is to get below the surface layers of consciousness to the depths of our innermost healing resources. (Look at the Model on p. 25.) Words that have been "consumer tested," so to speak, save us from having to learn that some words (like the

one's we make up or phrases that make us think of peaceful places) don't get us where we aim to go. Finally, research studies have found that spiritual words have greater benefits than secular or non-traditional words. But …the final choice is yours.

What difference does it make if I just say "Peace, Peace" instead of "Om Shanti" which means peace in Sanskrit anyway?
"Peace, peace" in English can have lots of associations for us (i.e., the Vietnam war, a peace sign, the peace dove, etc.), so repeating it in English may make it more difficult to achieve one-pointed focus while repeating the words and therefore, makes you more susceptible to distractions. The final choice is always yours.

When you say choose a word or a phrase that doesn't have any negative associations, I get confused. Is it the association that we are drawing from or the energy of the spiritually-infused word?
Mantrams are words that have an effect on the person who is repeating it. The more concentration you give to your mantram when repeating it, the greater the benefit. Any associations with mantram words are considered a distraction, even if pleasant. So when you repeat your mantram and you notice your mind drifting away, return your focused concentration completely on the mantram. You aren't drawing energy from the word itself, but by repeating the mantram, your mind becomes calm and allows you to connect to the inner resources and energy already within you.

What if I use a mantram for a while and then find another one that works better for me? Can I change it?
In the beginning stage of choosing a mantram, it is okay to experiment with different words and phrases. However, after experimenting awhile, it is important to choose and stick with one mantram for the rest of your life. Unlike some teachings that recommend a different mantram for different situations, we recommend using only one mantram for everything. It is easier to remember, making it easier to practice. With greater practice there is a greater benefit.

I think repeating a mantram is boring and mechanical. How do I know it is "working" for me?
In the initial stages of mantram repetition, your mind (and yourself) will find all sorts of reasons to resist repeating it: "this is too silly, too easy, it won't work, etc." You are learning to train attention, much like training a puppy, and therefore, will need gentle persistence and patience in repeating the mantram as much as possible throughout the day or before sleep in order to experience results. The best way to tell if it is "working" for you is to evaluate your reactivity to people and events that normally upset you. The changes are *very* subtle. After awhile, you'll begin to notice an ability to "pause" before reacting, giving you more time to make choices about how to respond to annoying situations.

Isn't mantram repetition a type of brainwashing?
Actually it is the opposite. Have you ever had a commercial jingle run through your mind even when you didn't "think" about it, and yet you couldn't stop it? The mantram is a tool that can only be repeated with your full attention. You will find that practicing mantram repetition helps you have more control over what you think. You learn to shift your thoughts when you choose.

Won't I lose my ability to think what I want?
You don't have the ability to think what you want now! You've already been brainwashed by years of conditioning and you don't have the choices you want. Mantram repetition is "brain cleansing" or "clearing" so that you DO have a choice to think about what is most beneficial for your welfare.

Why do you say that mantram repetition strengthens your control and will power?
Mantram repetition is a form of "self-regulation" and "attention training." Each time you bring your attention back to repeating the mantram, you strengthen your ability to focus. Strengthening your ability to focus on your mantram can then be transferred to other situations, such as focusing on a boring task or bringing your full attention to listening to others, such as when you have an upsetting moment. Using your mantram regularly provides you training for challenges related to crises such as accidents, illness, separation, betrayal, bereavement, which comes to you without warning. Mantram repetition can provide you the strength within yourself, especially when external supports aren't adequate (*SITS:* p. 29).

In your reading of *SITS*, on p. 81: "Nourish Your Mind: Building a strong body requires good food. The mind, too, needs nourishment to grow stronger. Just as the body is what we eat, the mind absorbs what it experiences. For a healthy body, we avoid junk food. Why not avoid junk experience too?"

What is will power?
For mantram repetition, we define "will power" as self-determination. Self-determination can be described as a consequence or by-product of directed attention, so by training attention you strengthen the determination (or will) to do what is beneficial.

Activity 4 — 5 minutes
STAGES OF MANTRAM PRACTICE

See p. 15 in the course manual. Review three stages of practice:

- Mechanical – may seem silly and monotonous. A little healthy skepticism is common but continue to repeat your mantram. Remember mantram is a force and it must work from deep inside. First stage is superficial, then it takes root and becomes natural just like breathing (Easwaran, *Words To Live By*, p. 354).
- Experiential – usually occurs after a few weeks – an "aha" moment, with less troubling behaviors – sometimes others notice changes before one does.
- Habitual – with time and daily practice mantram repetition becomes a habit, which reminds us daily of our "highest ideal" of the human experience.

Activity 5 — 5 minutes

PRACTICE MANTRAM REPETITION IN CLASS

Method: Demonstration (May use a small bell or chime to designate starting and ending times of mantram practice.)

1. "We are going to do an exercise of practicing mantram repetition while sitting with eyes closed. Repeating one's mantram with eyes closed could appear similar to sitting meditation, so REMEMBER that it's not necessary to practice repeating the mantram with your eyes closed (or not). It's important to just repeat your mantram daily while being active or not. For today when we practice mantram repetition we are using it to help you become aware of your mind's restlessness and this is an opportunity to practice bringing your attention back to the mantram."
2. "Think of your mind like a little puppy dog that gets distracted when it sees a squirrel and runs away. Gently call your mind back to the mantram as you would call a puppy dog—with compassion and firm kindness. Don't be harsh or judgmental. Remember this is a training exercise and you are just beginning."
3. "Pay attention to your thoughts and notice when they wander. Always gently bring them back to the mantram and try to slow down the speed of your thinking."
4. "I will ring this bell when it is time to start and I will ring it again in 5 minutes to let you know when to stop. Sit tall in your chair with feet comfortably on the floor, uncross your legs or feet and nothing in your lap."

   "Remember initially, the mind does not like to repeat a mantram; it wants to wander. When someone is not doing very well repeating a mantram, one explanation is simple: his/her mind is elsewhere. The early stages of mantram repetition are very mechanical, almost robot-like. Repeating a mantram is like a primary school for the mind. At first we are simply trying to get the mind to stay on the school grounds (even to just remember we even HAVE a mantram). The mind has been playing truant for years; when we try to concentrate on the mantram, we find all sorts of distractions. All we can do is stand at the doorstep and whistle, trying to call the mind back."

   "Even if all we do all day is to call the mind back to the mantram thirty-hundred-plus times, we have made great progress. We don't have to wait for the day when the mind can completely rest in the mantram to receive immense benefits. Each redirection of attention on the mantram is building the "muscle of the mind" and is improving your ability to concentrate; first on the mantram, and then outside of that, on whatever task or problem, you wish to tackle. The benefits are cumulative."

RING BELL TO BEGIN and END after 5 minutes. You may dim the lights if you wish.

5. Ask the group, "What was that like for you?" Look for themes and common experiences.
6. "Every time the mind wanders, it becomes an opportunity for training attention and bringing it back to the mantram. Be patient."

Activity 6 — 10 minutes
WHEN TO USE AND NOT USE A MANTRAM

Methods: Brainstorm, Presentation

1. The question is "When do I repeat my mantram? A better question is when NOT to repeat it, as we can use it nearly all day!"
   a. While you are walking
   b. During daily hygiene practices (brushing teeth, combing hair, etc.)
   c. Anytime you are put "on hold" while on the phone
   d. Waiting in lines
   e. Waiting for an elevator
   f. While putting on your seatbelt
   g. To interrupt disturbing thoughts
   h. **Before going to sleep.** [REPEATING THE MANTRAM OVER TIME CAN RESULT WITH BEING ABLE TO MORE RAPIDLY CONNECT TO PHYSICAL RELAXATION SUCH AS WHEN YOU FALL ASLEEP, BECAUSE REPEATING THE MANTRAM QUIETS THE MIND, CALMING THE BODY AND TRAINS THE ATTENTION.] **"The mantram can go deeper in consciousness at the moment of falling asleep. Everyone should be able to practice mantram repetition at night."**
   i. **ENCOURAGE LITTLE REMINDERS: "**Put a sticky note by your alarm clock to remind you to use mantram repetition before sleep and upon awakening. Look for activities you do every day where you can automatically repeat the mantram." "It's okay to sing or hum your mantram, but be sure to practice silently as well."
2. Refer to p. 16 in the course manual for **WAYS TO USE YOUR MANTRAM**
3. **WHEN NOT TO USE A MANTRAM:** While doing tasks that demand your attention!
   a. Planning and problem solving
   b. Using dangerous machinery
   c. While reading or concentrating on a subject
   d. DRIVING: NOTE—"This is a controversial topic as some people may fall asleep at the wheel while saying the mantram, while others use it to keep them calm. *The Mantram Handbook* says NOT to repeat the mantram while driving, but our research has shown that it can help people to become better drivers. USE CAUTION.
   e. "PHYSICAL SENSATIONS": "It is common for the rhythm of mantram repetition to coincide naturally with the rhythm of your heart rate or breathing. However, it is not necessary to force repeating a mantram to "match" a physical sensation such as heart rate because then you are splitting your attention."

NOTE: Instruct the class to take a few moments and think of activities that they do every single day. These could be things like: brushing teeth, making coffee, eating breakfast, walking to the car, putting on a seatbelt, etc. Allow people to do this for about 2 to 3 minutes. Then ask for 1 example from each person (*write list on the board*) and explain that these activities can become a "trigger" or "reminder" for repeating the mantram.

Activity 7 — 20 minutes
MY LIST OF ANNOYING THINGS/THINGS I WANT TO HANDLE BETTER

Method: Discussion of homework assignment (p. 18 in the course manual; Ongoing assignment)

[**NOTE:** If participants have failed to do the homework assignment of filling out a list of annoying things, spend a few minutes in class allowing them to do so.]

1. Leader should start and list one example of an annoying thing and write it on the board. Tell why it is particularly bothersome.
2. Have participants read their annoying things and write them on the board.
3. When the list is finished, go through each item and discuss how mantram repetition may be utilized to help "detach."
4. Use this time to address stress symptoms and how they impair functioning. Use this exercise about annoying things to highlight how the practice of mantram repetition can serve as a stabilizer for the mind to manage one's thoughts and reactivity.

Activity 8 — 3-5 minutes
USING A COUNTER AND TRACKING LOGS

Methods: Presentation and Practice

1. Distribute counters (if using golf counters or lap counters, turn to "zero") and tracking logs
2. Describe that what you are counting is initiation of the mantram and not the number of repetitions
3. "If I was using my counter on a typical day; maybe that I use my mantram when I woke up, took a shower, was stuck in traffic, someone ticked me off, before I ate, or felt bored. My counter now says 6 and this number is recorded on the Tracking Log."
4. "Either then or in the morning I record the 6 in the upper box of the Tracking Log box and if I used it for sleep I write 'Yes' in the box."
5. You'll also answer three other questions:
   a. "Any medication changes over the past week?"
   b. "Seen any healthcare clinicians over the past week?"
   c. "How confident are you in managing stress on a scale of 1-10?"

Activity 9 — 5 minutes
CLOSING, HOMEWORK AND EXPERIMENTS

Review:

a. Stages of Practice"
   - Mechanical – boring, silly, etc.
   - Experiential – "Aha moment"
   - Habitual – comes to you when you need it and when you don't need it
b. How to practice and to basically experiment with practicing in a variety of environments– **when you need it and when you don't need it**
c. When to use your mantram and times when NOT to use mantram repetition
d. Continue to list things that annoy you as these are mantram moments
e. Tracking your mantram use (Optional)

1. Ask class members to begin using mantrams whenever they can, for as long as they can
2. Remind participants that mantram repetition is a training of attention and although it sounds like a simple concept, it is really HARD to do. We view this training the same way as running for a marathon - persistence is the key. You cannot expect to just go out and run a 24-mile marathon, nor can you go out and have perfect focus without practice. The point is to incorporate the mantram practice into your daily activities to ensure that it is there for you when you really need it.
3. Emphasize the importance of using a mantram when it is ***NOT*** needed; when you are waiting in line, when you are placed on hold, etc.
4. Continue to add to My List of Annoying Things on p. 18
5. Go over the reading assignment for next week:
   - Chapter 3 in the course manual
   - *Strength in the Storm* pp. 107–134 (Chapter 5: "Choose Kindness")
6. Remind people to bring their course manual every week
7. Review using counter and Tracking Logs (Optional)
8. Stay around for a few minutes to answer questions and clean up

Class 3: The Stress-Response and Mantram Repetition

Purpose

- To introduce the Stress Response and the outcomes of mantram repetition
- To introduce the power and problem of the mind/reflexive thinking and directed attention
- To review emotional activation and stress symptoms
- To discuss how to retrain the mind to deal with emotions
- To describe philosophy of mantram repetition to tap spiritual resources

Objectives

By the end of this session, the group members will be able to:

1. Apply mantram repetition to stressful situations
2. Identify ways to interrupt the stress response
3. Learn the value of mantram writing

Materials

- Nametags and markers
- Little journal or tablets for writing the mantram

Agenda

(Post this Agenda at the beginning of class)

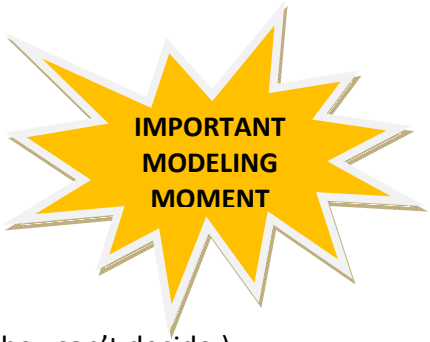
Activity 1: Mantram Storytelling: Questions & Answers
Activity 2: List of Annoying Things
Activity 3: Mantram Practice in Class
Activity 4: The Power and Problem of the Mind
Activity 5: How Frequent Mantram Repetition Works
Activity 6: The Stress Response and Retraining the Mind/Reducing Reactivity
Activity 7: Writing the Mantram
Activity 8: Closing, Homework and Experiments

Cover Reading Assignment for Next Week

- Read pp. 34–58 in *Strength in the Storm*
- Read Chapter 4 in the course manual and do slowing down exercises on pp. 33-34 and 35 before class
- (Optional) Report on your daily log and counters

Activity 1 — 15 minutes
MANTRAM STORYTELLING: QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Method: Group Discussion



TURN ON TAPE RECORDER

1. Facilitate "mantram" storytelling—start with your own
2. List ways that people used mantram
3. Questions and answers regarding technique and practice:
   "How many are still struggling to choose one?" (Suggest "Rama" if they can't decide.)

Activity 2 — 15 minutes
LIST OF ANNOYING THINGS

Method: Group Exercise

1. Return to "My List of Annoying Things" and see which ones could be managed with mantram
2. Ask if people were able to remember the mantram for their annoying things
3. Allow discussion of stress-related symptoms and ways that using a mantram can increase one's ability to cope with them

Activity 3 — 5 minutes
MANTRAM PRACTICE IN CLASS

Explain that: "We are going to do an exercise of practicing mantram repetition while sitting with eyes closed (or not). We practice in this manner in class but it isn't necessary to practice in this manner at home. In fact, we encourage you to practice doing other activities. When we practice quietly in class we are using this method to help you become aware of your mind's restlessness and as an opportunity to practice bringing your attention back to the mantram."

Method: Group Practice

1. "Pay attention to your thoughts and notice when they wander. Always gently bring them back to the mantram and try to slow down the speed of your thinking."
2. "I will ring this bell when it is time to start and I will ring it again in 5 minutes to let you know when to stop. Sit tall in your chair with feet on the floor and nothing in your lap. Gently close your eyes (or not) and we'll begin."

RING BELL TO BEGIN and END after 5 minutes. You may dim the lights if you wish.

3. Ask the group, "What was that like for you?" Look for themes and common experiences.
4. Emphasize that every time the mind wanders, it becomes an opportunity for training attention and bringing it back to the mantram. Be patient.

Activity 4 — 25 minutes
THE POWER & PROBLEM OF THE MIND

Method: Presentation

1. Introduce the "Power and the Problem" of the Mind.
   "The mind is a wonderful and powerful tool giving us intellect, creativity, organization, etc. The main problem of the mind is that it has too much speed and too little direction. The mind has a mind of its own. Sometimes the mind is like a 24-hour thought factory with no supervisor! We suggest the mind is like a 2-year old and it does what it wants. For example, try to focus your mind: How long can you hold a thought before your mind skips away?"

   EXAMPLES:
   a. "How many of you have been physically exhausted at the end of a day and then gone to bed, but couldn't sleep because your mind was ruminating about the past or thinking about the future?"
   b. "How many of you have tried to exercise, lose weight, or stop smoking but despite your commitment to change, you give up? Have you ever heard your mind saying, 'Oh, put it off until tomorrow.'"
   c. "How many of you find yourself procrastinating and putting things off, knowing that it ultimately makes you unhappy?"
   d. "Sometimes, it feels like a 'committee' in our heads. There is a critic—voice of judgment; the child—who whines to get his/her way; the voice of authority—telling us to follow the rules; the rule-breaker - always rationalizing, etc."
   e. The mind is like a 2-year old and it does what it wants. Let's do a brief exercise for a couple of minutes. See how long you can focus your mind on one thought before it skips away.
   f. Being stuck in traffic. Traffic problems create stress because it uses time and we have "NO CONTROL" to do anything about traffic or other things. The thought once again is "not having enough time" and "having too much to do."

2. "Training your attention can be one of the most challenging things you can do. Parents and teachers have told us 'to concentrate,' but no one has ever taught us ***HOW to concentrate***."
3. "Repeating a mantram silently to ourselves, and bringing our thoughts and attention back to the word or phrase we choose is one method of training attention. We can't successfully repeat a mantram without focusing our attention on it. Once we notice that our minds drift away and we bring them back to the mantram, we are increasing our intention and our will. The greater our focus on the words or phrase of a mantram, the slower and more intentional our thinking becomes."

4. Automatic Thinking and Directed Attention
   "Obsessive moods or compulsive behaviors are a signal that your thinking is not under your control. Norman Cousins writes about two kinds of thinking. The first he calls 'reflective' thinking (directed attention), where we choose what we will think about and are more or less in control of our thoughts. Then there is **'reflexive' thinking** (automatic thinking), which is far more common. Here our thoughts react to whatever internal or external stimuli happen by. Reflexive thinking is a 'knee-jerk' or automatic reaction." Reflexive thinking could be reacting to situations/events and you may feel rage, insulted or disrespected by others when that may not have been the actual situation – taking things personally.

   Hebb's Law, which is the adaptation of neurons in the brain during the learning process and may be best said "nerves that are wired together fire together." "Life will always be full of ups and downs, but we don't have to go up and down with it. We can't control what life sends us but we [have control/choice on] how we respond" (*SITS:* p. 15). "The very nature of the mind is to be fickle, distractible, constantly in motion…doing whatever it likes." The mind can't bear to be contradicted and it can lead to being angry, lashing out with hurtful words, which is like a knee-jerk reaction (*SITS:* p. 119). However, knowing about Hebbian theory aids us with knowledge that we can change automatic behavior or reactions even when we are triggered by an event/situation.

Activity 5 — 5 minutes
HOW FREQUENT MANTRAM REPETITION WORKS

Review p. 25 in the course manual. Describe how mantram repetition helps calm the mind so that we can tap into spiritual resources of love, patience, compassion, hope, joy, peace and goodwill.

[Note: Not everyone will agree with this model, but merely explain it is one philosophy or conceptualization of how mantram works!]

Activity 6 — 15 minutes
THE STRESS RESPONSE AND RETRAINING THE MIND/REDUCING REACTIVITY

Method: Presentation

1. Refer to p. 26 in the course manual on "Using Mantram Repetition for Reducing Reactivity"
   a. "Mantram Repetition is a way of interrupting the automatic (reflexive), knee-jerk reaction of the stress response. It has taken us years to develop these habits, so we will require practice to reverse them."
   b. "How many of you feel like your mind is "more out of control" than when the course first started? If so, you are raising the awareness of your thinking process. It is typical to feel you are getting worse before you get better. Be patient. Practice persistently."
2. Go over retraining the mind to deal with emotions:
   a. Emotions are a human part of life and we may not be able to totally get rid of them.

However, we can use the mantram to buffer our emotions—both the good and bad ones.

b. When a powerful emotion overtakes us, it is difficult not to get swept away by it. Mantram repetition can be like a life boat or raft—something to hang onto when we are flooded by waves of emotions like the sea.
c. The mantram can also be used to manage good or positive emotions like excitement, hopefulness, anticipation, or elation. We are not trying to suppress these emotions, but rather to stay in control of them. Using pause provides you time to choose and choice is freedom (*SITS*: p. 129).

Activity 7 — 5 minutes
WRITING THE MANTRAM

Method: Group Exercise on p. 27

For some of us, mentally repeating the mantram is not enough. Writing can help plant the mantram more firmly in our minds. It is harder to be distracted while writing a mantram over and over.

[**Note:** Some people have memories of having to write as a punishment in elementary school. If a participant refuses to write, ask them to close their eyes (or not) and repeat their mantram during this exercise.]

Sit together and write mantram for 3 minutes.

Activity 8 — 5 minutes
CLOSING, HOMEWORK AND EXPERIMENTS

Review of today's topic: The power and problem of the mind

- The wonders of the mind – intelligent, creative, etc.
- The problems of the mind
  - Reacting – "knee-jerk"/automatic (Hebb's Law – what is wired together fires together – habit, but remember this can be changed)
  - Distractible – not only by an external source but internally also such as irritation, anger, resentment, grief, etc.
- Mantram is used to train the attention (retraining the mind) but providing a pause and giving one the ability to choose versus reacting. Having choice can move one to acting more kindly and true freedom. You can learn new habits (Hebb's Theory states with neuroplasticity we can learn new habits, therefore learn to respond versus just reacting).
- Introduction of mantram writing

1. Ask participants to bring their course manual to class each week
2. Thank folks for coming. Ask them to spend some time writing the mantram every day this week.

3. Continue to track mantram use (Optional)
4. Read assignment:
    a. Chapter 4 in the course manual and complete exercises:
    b. “Is Hurry a Problem in Your Life?” on pp. 33 and 34
    c. “Are you a “Speedaholic?” on p. 35
    d. Setting Priorities on p. 37
    e. *Strength in the Storm* pp. 34-58 (Chapter 2: “Be at Peace in the Moment)
5. Stay around to answer questions and straighten up the room

Class 4: Slowing Down versus Automatic Pilot

Purpose

- To introduce the topic of slowing down
- To understand that slowing down refers to the mind as well as physical activity
- To discuss how slowing down involves setting priorities

Objectives

By the end of this session, the group members will be able to:

1. Identify the places and situations where they are "speeded up!"
2. Identify the way "hurry sickness" creates more stress
3. Identify ways to slow the mind and slow down physically, to enhance life

Materials

- Nametags and markers
- Paper to write down participants' slowing down homework projects

Agenda

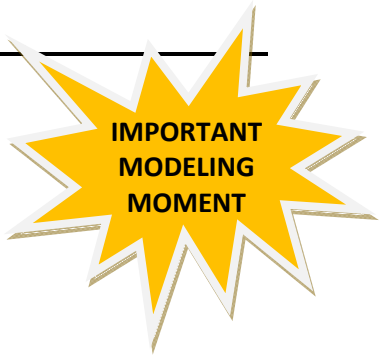
(*Post this Agenda at the beginning of class)*

Activity 1: Mantram Storytelling: Questions & Answers
Activity 2: Mantram to Initiate Pause Time
Activity 3: Hurry Sickness and Speedaholic Exercise
Activity 4: Setting Priorities
Activity 5: Mantram Practice – Silently or Writing
Activity 6: Closing, Homework and Experiments

Cover Reading Assignment for Next Week

- Read pp. 58 – 81 in *Strength in the Storm*
- Read Chapter 5 in the course manual
- Report on your daily log and counters (Optional)

Activity 1 — 15 minutes
MANTRAM STORYTELLING: QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



Method: Group Discussion

1. Ask for experiences of repeating the mantram and writing the mantram
2. Facilitate mantram storytelling (by giving an example yourself)
3. Questions and answers regarding technique and practice

Activity 2 — 10 minutes
MANTRAM TO INITIATE PAUSE TIME

Method: Group Discussion

Review the previous weeks work on 1) mantram repetition, 2) interrupting the stress response, and 3) allowing for pause time. This pause time gives us a chance to choose how we are going to react to a situation. As Norman Cousins stated, it is reflective thinking rather than reflexive (automatic/knee jerk reaction). Ask class for related experiences. Use this time to discuss pause time and how it relates to managing stress situations, as it relates to irritability, anger, insomnia, anxiety, etc.

Activity 3 — 30 minutes
HURRY SICKNESS AND SPEEDAHOLIC EXERCISE

Methods: Presentation, Group Discussion, Group Exercise

1. Introduction to slowing down and developing patience. Review chart on p. 30 showing how modernization has speed us up. It is not uncommon that one will rush to the next task versus taking time to pause with the time saved from modern technology. Ask a participant to read a paragraph starting on page 31 "The act of…" and end with the last paragraph on page 32 (this will introduce class to being present-centered or intention living). People who slow down are better able to live in the present as they take steps to give their undivided interest to the here and now versus allowing their thoughts to zoom and feel harried (*SITS*: pp. 39 - 44).
2. See "Signs and Signals of Hurry Sickness" on pp. 33-34. Ask participants their total number they circled from both pages. You can write their results on the board as an exercise to see how "speeded up" the class is in comparison to each other. Be non-judgmental. Just note the range of scores.
3. Review exercise "Are You a Speedaholic?" on p. 35. Write scores on the board. Note the range of scores.
4. Review the "Tips for Slowing Down" on p. 36. **Read the FAQs below before moving to #5.**

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) about Slowing Down

If I slow down, I'm afraid of losing my job. Won't slowing down make me less efficient?
Slowing down actually increases the efficiency, accuracy and quality of your work. Research has documented the value of slowing down and being one-pointed. Also, slowing down doesn't mean moving at a snail's pace, but rather moving intentionally, with choice and clarity. (*SITS:* p. 37 – Story about Heather, a nurse.)

There's no way I can slow down. If I do, how can I get everything done?
If you have too much to do, then it's time to reflect on your life and your priorities. Decide what is most important for your well-being and try to eliminate activities that drain your energy. Slowing down is all about making choices. Story of Musical Chairs – Spiritual figures like St. Francis Assisi, Teresa of Avila, and Mahatma Ghandi would step aside, they would choose not to participate in the fuss and frenzy as if they had all the time in the world. Yet, they were able to accomplish more and their lives had more meaning…(*SITS:* pp. 39-40). Buddha - "It's because they live completely in the present – the only time there is" (*SITS:* p. 40).

5. From these exercises ask each person to choose something that they do in a hurry and to intentionally slow down this next week. (Write down each participant's slowing down activity, which can followed-up with next class.)

Activity 4 — 20 minutes
SETTING PRIORITIES

Methods: Presentation and Group Exercise

Review exercise on p. 37, "Making Priorities to Help in Slowing Down." Remind them that this exercise is for the purpose of eliminating excess stress (**SHOULDS)** in our lives. This is not a punishment, it is an opportunity to see where we spend our time to better assess our priorities.

Activity 5 — 5 minutes
MANTRAM PRACTICE – SILENTLY OR WRITING

Method: Group Exercise

Sit together and say or write mantram for 3 minutes.

Activity 6 — 5 minutes
CLOSING, HOMEWORK AND EXPERIMENTS

Review of today's topic: Slowing down:

- "Hurry blocks our access to our inner resources.
- One of life's most precious skills is learning to slow down and live completely in the present moment" (*SITS:* p. 35).
- "Time does not hurry us; we hurry ourselves." When we slow down, we can see that there is never any moment but the present, never any time but now (*SITS:* p. 54).

1. Continue using the mantram and writing the mantram
2. Continue using your counters and tracking sheets (Optional)
3. Choose at least one task that you typically "rush" to get done, and do it slowly. Be prepared to report on your experience next week.
4. Make a list of priorities in your life. Are you making time for the best?
5. Leave earlier to appointments and notice things around you
6. Notice how "speeded-up" you are
7. Read assignment:
   a. Chapter 5 in the course manual
   b. *Strength in the Storm* pp. 58 – 81 (Chapter 3: "Take the Worry Away")

Class 5: One-Pointed Attention vs. Multitasking

Purpose

- To introduce advantages of one-pointed attention versus multitasking
- To identify ways to practice one-pointed attention

Objectives

By the end of this session, the group members will be able to:

1. List advantages of one-pointed attention
2. Apply one-pointed attention to mantram repetition as well as external tasks

Materials

- Nametags and markers
- Copies of tracking sheets

Agenda

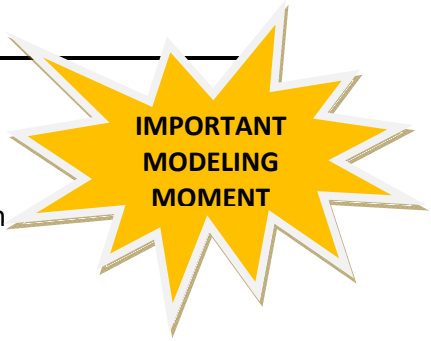
(Post this agenda at the beginning of class)

Activity 1: Mantram Storytelling: Questions and Answers
Activity 2: Follow up on Slowing Down Assignment
Activity 3: Mantram Practice
Activity 4: One-Pointed Attention vs. Multitasking and Hypervigilance
Activity 5: Mantram Writing
Activity 6: Closing, Homework and Experiments

Cover Reading Assignment for Next Week

- Read Chapter 6 in the course manual and pp. 135 – 167 in *Strength in the Storm*
- Practice using the mantram at different times and places
- Choose one activity and practice one-pointed attention

Activity 1 — 20 minutes
MANTRAM STORYTELLING: QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



Method: Group Discussion

1. Ask for experiences of repeating the mantram and writing the mantram
2. Facilitate mantram storytelling (by giving an example yourself)
3. Questions and answers regarding technique and practice

Activity 2 — 20 minutes
FOLLOW UP ON SLOWING DOWN ASSIGNMENT

Method: Group Discussion

1. Ask each individual to report on their chosen "slowing down" activities:
   - What did they notice about slowing down?
   - What was it like (positives and negatives)?
   - Highlight the benefits of intentionally slowing down one's thoughts and/or actions
2. Describe benefits of slowing down:
   - Decreasing the sense of "time pressure" and "hurry sickness"
   - Enhancing the quality of relationships by increasing patience and respect
   - Evaluating "shoulds" and setting priorities
   - Increased awareness of staying in the present moment for quality of life
   - Decreasing mistakes and inefficiency
   - Less irritation
   - Less fatigue
   - Decrease in the release of stress hormones

Activity 3 — 5 minutes
MANTRAM PRACTICE

Method: Group Exercise

Sit together for 5 minutes repeating mantram, silently with eyes closed (or not).

Activity 4 — 25 minutes

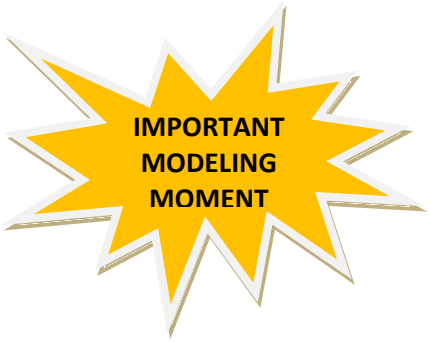
ONE-POINTED ATTENTION VS. MULTITASKING AND HYPERVIGILANCE

Method: Presentation and Group Discussion

1. Introduce "One-pointed Attention versus Multitasking"
2. Everything in our culture values multitasking and getting alot of things done!
3. Do you ever have a day that sounds like this? (Read the story on p. 39 in the course manual, which shows how out of control the mind can be.)
   a. "Turn your attention to whatever is happening in your mind. There's probably alot going on in there. The typical human mind is like a supercomputer possessed by the soul of a demented squirrel. It's constantly calculating, anticipating, remembering, fantasizing, worrying, hoarding, bouncing frenetically from thought to thought" (Martha Beck, *The Joy Diet*).
   b. "In principle, training attention is simple: when the mind wanders, bring it back to what you want or need to be doing. The problem arises when the distraction is not a stray thought, but a compulsive resentment, irritation, apprehension, or craving. The more attention we give to such thoughts, the greater and more powerful they become. If we withdraw our attention from these thoughts, they shrink and disappear. One way to interrupt compulsive thinking is to repeat the mantram until the connection between the thought and your attention is broken. A compulsive thought - whether it is anger, depression, or a strong craving - does not really have any power of its own. All the power is in the attention we give it" (Easwaran, *Words to Live By)*.
4. **DEFINITION OF BOREDOM: Wishing you were somewhere else.**
   a. How many of you have been involved in an event or activity where time just flew! What were you doing?

      [Give an example from your own life, such as being absorbed in a movie or hobby. Ask for volunteers to share…note that most people are doing things they love when time flies!]

      When you are totally absorbed in an activity you love, time flies and it is easy to stay focused. When having to do something we dislike, however, it is easy to feel bored or to procrastinate. Being able to focus our attention on tasks we dislike is a powerful skill that can be learned and cultivated. (Wandering thoughts such as daydreaming, worrying or nursing a grudge, is how a person can train the mind to escape from the present moment. One can feel trapped in the past or the future [*SITS*: p. 43].



5. **SPLITTING ATTENTION**:
   a. TV commercials; TV screen with Dow Jones average scrolling across bottom; having the radio or TV on in the background; eating while reading; driving using cell phone, etc. We live where our attention is (*SITS:* p. 66).
6. **DRAWBACKS OF MULTITASKING**: Here is some research information:
   a. Read "Multitasking Drains Brain" in the course manual (p. 40)

(1) Dr. Just: The brain has a finite amount of space. Talking when driving doesn't double the power of the brain, it decreases it.
(2) Stanford University: Found persistent multitaskers performed badly with a variety of tasks; "lousy at everything"
(3) Easwaran: "When the mental powers are divided up, less remains available to the tasks at hand." Such as talking on the phone when driving - one attention is split and may not see what is up ahead (i.e., woman talking with her daughter got hit head on). Could it have been prevented?

b. **SWITCH TIME**: David Meyer, PhD, a University of Michigan cognitive scientist, gave students 10 multiplication problems that each took 1 minute. Then he gave them 10 problems that alternated between multiplication and division problems, and they each took 1½ minutes. Why? The brain needs time to switch to the new assignment and decide which resources to use. The brain requires "switch time" - time to switch tasks. The more complex the tasks involved, the longer the warm-up time.
c. **THE POINT?** You'll probably avoid errors - and *save time* - if you concentrate on *one thing at a time*. Also there is a special sweetness of being in the moment that enhances the quality of life. It somehow feels like a time machine that gives you more hours in a day.

7. Discuss "Experiments with One-pointed Attention," which serves as introduction to the assignment next week.

Have each participant read a paragraph of the example on p. 42.

Begin with relationships. **You can enhance your relationships by devoting one-pointed attention to others when they are talking. As an experiment, for the next week, give others your undivided attention. For example, when listening to others talk, don't interrupt or finish their sentences. Notice what it is like to be one-pointed.**

Another assignment for this next week is to choose one other thing you will commit to practicing being one-pointed. **NOTE:** The goal is one-pointed attention, not necessarily finishing a project. **Keep track (write it down) of (each) participant(s) chosen experiment and bring to the next meeting for homework review.**

a. Talking to people (on phone or otherwise) without doing anything else or getting distracted. Some call this "being present."
b. Eating without reading or watching TV
c. Stop any type of "multitasking" (ironing and watching TV)
d. Doing the dishes or housecleaning (vacuuming story)
e. Driving without the radio
f. Using the mantram

8. Discuss the relationship of the mantram and one-pointedness: "Mantram repetition is a form of one-pointed attention within the mind - an internal one-pointedness. Doing one task at a time is an example of external one-pointedness. They work hand-in-hand. By repeating the mantram, you are increasing your ability to concentrate. Such practice can then be transferred to doing one thing at a time."
9. Here are some analogies of one-pointed focus:
"Thoughts are like a balloon and your attention is like putting air in the balloon. The more you focus, the bigger the balloon gets. When you withdraw your attention, the balloon

becomes empty - deflated. The same is true of ruminating thoughts. Withdraw your attention, and they get smaller. Sometimes, thoughts get stuck in a rut, like a needle stuck on a phonograph, or record player. Just as you would pick up the arm of the needle, and move it to another song, with one-pointed focus, you can pick up your attention and move it where you want."

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about One-Pointed Attention

When you are doing your one-pointed attention project, should you be just focusing on your project or saying the mantram too? If you are saying the mantram isn't that having your attention in two places?
When you are doing a one-pointed attention project that requires decision making, planning, or prioritizing, then it is best not to use a mantram. Give your project your full attention. However, when projects tend to be monotonous or repetitious and you find it hard to stay focused, use the mantram as a "rapid focus tool" to bring your attention back to the project.

Since practicing the mantram and trying to be one-pointed, my mind is more speeded up than ever. Am I getting worse?
Often people are not aware of their thought processes or how speeded up their minds are. Practicing these tools is like shining a spotlight on your consciousness and raising your awareness. You are not "getting worse" but instead, becoming aware of just how speeded-up you already are! Noticing this is "good news" because you can change only what you are aware of.

Activity 5 — 5 minutes
MANTRAM WRITING

Method: Group Exercise

Sit together and write mantram for 3 minutes.

Activity 6 — 15 minutes
CLOSING, HOMEWORK AND EXPERIMENTS

Review:

- One-pointedness versus multitasking
- How slowing down leads to being one-pointed
- One-pointedness keeps one in the present, therefore you are:
  a. Not daydreaming with split attention
  b. Not ruminating/thinking of the past or worrying about the future, which drains your resources/energy for living in the present. Ask yourself: "is it helpful to me to expend my energy/resources on thinking/ruminating, worrying, feeling resentful" or can you conserve your energy by repeating your mantram. Could you cope with your daily challenges and live in the present if you had more energy?

- Mantram repetition is a form of one-pointedness – being internally one-pointed

1. Practice using mantram in different times and places
2. Continue tracking mantram use (Optional)
3. Continue writing in mantram journal daily
4. Choose your one-pointed projects. One project is to practice one-pointed attention in a relationship, and the other is to complete a task. Be prepared to share your experiences in class next week.
5. Read assignment:
   a. Chapter 6 in the course manual
   b. *Strength in the Storm* pp. 135 – 167 (Chapter 6: "Light the Darkness")

Class 6: One-Pointed Attention *AND* Slowing Down

Purpose

- To explain how one-pointed attention and slowing down go hand-in-hand
- To discuss the relationships between mantram repetition, one-pointed attention, and slowing down for managing stress and making wise decisions
- To identify how using focus and intentional decision making can enhance situations or events in our lives

Objectives

By the end of this session, the group members will be able to:

1. Explain how one-pointed attention and slowing down complement each other
2. Explain how one-pointed attention and slowing down can be applied to mantram repetition and external activities
3. Increase awareness of having a choice by practicing one-pointedness and slowing down versus acting on "automatic pilot"

Materials

- Nametags and markers

Agenda

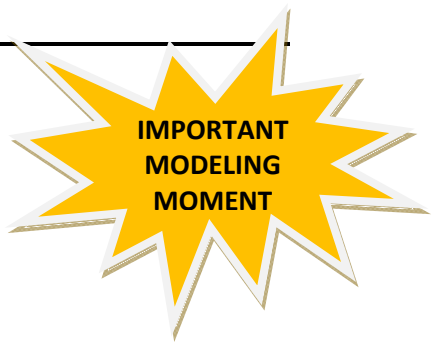
(*Post this agenda at the beginning of class)*

Activity 1: Mantram Storytelling: Questions & Answers
Activity 2: Follow Up on One-Pointed Attention Assignment
Activity 3: Mantram Practice in Class
Activity 4: One-Pointed Attention and Slowing Down
Activity 5: Dealing with Unhealthy Habits: Writing the Mantram
Activity 6: Living Intentionally and Making Wise Choices
Activity 7: Closing, Homework and Experiments

Cover Reading Assignment for Next Week

- Read Chapter 7 in the course manual and do the exercise on p. 53
- Review pp. 106 – 133 in *Strength in the Storm*

Activity 1 — 15 minutes
MANTRAM STORIES: QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



Methods: Group Discussion

1. Ask for experiences of repeating the mantram and mantram writing
2. Facilitate storytelling (by giving an example yourself)
3. Questions and answers regarding technique and practice

Activity 2 — 30 minutes
FOLLOW UP ON ONE-POINTED ATTENTION ASSIGNMENT

Method: Group Discussion

1. Bring your list of chosen one-pointed experiment for each participant and ask each individual to report on their experience with their project:
   a. What did they notice about being one-pointed? What was it like (any positives and/or negatives)?
   b. Highlight the benefits of being one-pointed such as making fewer errors, have more satisfaction, less irritability, more awareness of your environment, simplifying one's life, improving relationships, being in the present.
2. Describe other ways of being one-pointed:
   a. Talking to people (on phone or otherwise) "being present"
   b. Eating without reading or watching TV
   c. Stop any type of "multitasking" (ironing and watching TV)
   d. Doing the dishes or housecleaning (vacuuming story)
   e. Driving without the radio
   f. Using the mantram

Activity 3 — 5 minutes
MANTRAM PRACTICE IN CLASS

Method: Group Exercise

Sit together for 5 minutes repeating the mantram, silently with eyes closed (or not).

Activity 4 — 10 minutes
ONE-POINTED ATTENTION AND SLOWING DOWN

Methods: Presentation, Group Discussion and Group Exercise

1. Introduce one-pointed attention and slowing down
2. Ask each participant to read a paragraph out loud from pp. 45-46 starting with Easwaran's excerpt in the course manual about – it's about the relationship of one-pointedness and slowing down
3. Ask participants for their experiences of slowing down and one-pointedness: "Have you noticed how being one-pointed tends to help you slow down?"

Activity 5 — 10 minutes
DEALING WITH UNHEALTHY HABITS: WRITING THE MANTRAM

Unhealthy habits are repeated thoughts and behaviors that seem out of our control. Mantram repetition can be used as a tool to interrupt the automatic and seemingly unconscious thoughts and behaviors that become harmful to our health. Ask each participant to read out loud a paragraph at a time, "Dealing with Unhealthy Habits: Writing the Mantram" on p. 47 and discuss the various strategies for tracking a harmful habit by mantram writing (p. 50).

Ask everyone if there is a habit they want to change. If so, could he/she/they be willing to tackle it using mantram writing this week? Why or why not?

Activity 6 — 10 minutes
LIVING INTENTIONALLY AND MAKING WISE CHOICES

Methods: Class Discussion

1. See p. 49 in the course manual for a diagram to summarize how we usually are and how we strive to be
2. Mantram repetition creates some "pause time" that allows us to think more carefully about decisions and actions. Using your mantram is like stepping on the brakes to slow the racing mind from fear and anger (*SITS:* p. 149); "a distracted mind can be made one-pointed" (*SITS:* p. 143)
3. Mantram repetition requires one-pointedness and helps to slow down our thoughts, so that we may think about our choices and their consequences.
4. It is important to realize that there are "choice points" from moment to moment. We can choose what is good for us - which might mean delayed gratification or we can choose what is not good for us - which often comes from habits or automatic behaviors. Don't be at the mercy of fear, anger, irritation, obsessions, etc. (*SITS:* p. 145); "We can tune to a more positive channel" (*SITS:* p. 139).

5. Mantram repetition, one-pointed attention, and slowing down all work together to help us become wise stewards of our lives.

Activity 7 — 5 minutes
CLOSING, HOMEWORK AND EXPERIMENTS

Review:

- Slowing down and one-pointed attention leads to making healthier choices and living more intentionally.
  a. Daily monitor whether you are speeded up or multitasking
  b. Contrast how you feel at the end of a day after hurrying/multitasking versus being one-pointed and slowed down
- Deal with unhealthy habits by writing the mantram

1. Continue using the mantram, writing the mantram, practicing one-pointedness and slowing down
2. Continue using your counters and tracking sheets (Optional)
3. Identify situations or events in your life where you can be more intentional and make wise or healthier choices. Use mantram writing to manage unhealthy habits.
4. Reading assignment:
   a. Chapter 7 in the course manual and do the exercise on p. 53 before class. List activities you do EVERY day (see p. 54 for examples). Make a list and start to use these activities to remind you to repeat your mantram.
   b. Review pp. 106 – 133 in *Strength in the Storm* (Chapter 5: “Choose Kindness”)

Class 7: Making Mantram Repetition a Part of Your Life

Purpose

- To explore strategies on how to make mantram repetition a part of your life
- To understand the importance of creating daily habits that include mantram repetition, one-pointed attention, and slowing down

Objectives

By the end of this session, the group members will be able to:

1. Describe numerous strategies for making mantram repetition a habit
2. Identify activities in one's life that can be linked to mantram practice
3. Increase self-compassion and reduce negative self-judgment related to using the mantram, one-pointed attention, and slowing down

Materials

- Nametags and markers

Agenda

(*Post this agenda at the beginning of class)*

Activity 1: Mantram Storytelling: Questions & Answers
Activity 2: Follow Up on Slowing Down and One-pointed Attention
Activity 3: Discuss Strategies to Deal with Unhealthy Habits
Activity 4: Mantram Practice in Class
Activity 5: Strategies for Making Mantram Practice a Part of Your Life
Activity 6: Detached Reflection and Redirected Determination
Activity 7: Mantram Writing (may omit if practiced mantram repetition silently)
Activity 8: Closing, Homework and Experiments

Cover Reading Assignment for Next Week

- (Optional) Pp. 159-205 in *Strength in the Storm*
- Read Chapter 8 in the course manual
- Practice using your mantram in different times and places
- List "reminders" that help you remember to repeat mantram

Activity 1 — 15 minutes
MANTRAM STORYTELLING: QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Method: Group Discussion

1. Ask for experiences of repeating the mantram and mantram writing
2. Facilitate storytelling (by giving an example yourself)
3. Questions and answers regarding technique and practice

Activity 2 — 20 minutes
FOLLOW UP ON SLOWING DOWN AND ONE-POINTED ATTENTION

Method: Group Discussion

Ask each individual to report on their own observations of how slowing down and one-pointed attention go hand in hand. Ask the following questions:

1. "What activities were you engaged in this past week when you realized that you needed to slow down and be more one-pointed?"
2. "Are you feeling resistant to change? Is your mind rebelling when you want to slow down or stop multitasking? Or are YOU rebelling? Are there some activities where you consciously are choosing to speed up or continue multitasking? If so, are you aware of your choices, without judgments?"
3. "Highlight the benefits of intentionally slowing down and developing one-pointed attention." (Less errors, more satisfaction, less irritability, more awareness of your environment, simplifying one's life, being in the present.)
4. "What observations have you made about yourself during the past 7 weeks of this class?"

[Give people time to reflect and share. In order to facilitate this discussion, you may give an example of how some people feel they are getting "worse" because now they notice how out of control their minds and thinking are!]

Activity 3 — 10 minutes
DISCUSS STRATEGIES TO DEAL WITH UNHEALTHY HABITS

Method: Group Discussion

Ask for experiences in dealing with unhealthy habits. What were successes or obstacles?

Activity 4 — 5 minutes
MANTRAM PRACTICE IN CLASS

Method: Group Exercise

Sit together for 5 minutes repeating mantram, silently with eyes closed (or not).

Activity 5 — 15 minutes
STRATEGIES TO MAKE MANTRAM REPETITION A PART OF YOUR LIFE

Methods: Presentation**,** Group Discussion and Group Exercise

1. There are several ways to help you make mantram repetition a part of your life. Over time and with lots of practice, your mantram will simply pop into your head. But you must practice repeating it regularly for this to happen. Here are some tips that will help you remember to practice. Each of these situations or activities can become a reminder for you to use your mantram.
   a. While you are walking anywhere
   b. During daily hygiene (brushing teeth, combing hair, etc.)
   c. Anytime you are put "on hold" while on the phone
   d. Waiting in lines
   e. Waiting for an elevator
   f. While putting on your seatbelt
   g. Before going to sleep
2. Group Exercise:
   a. Ask the group to turn to p. 53 in their course manual and to fill in activities they do every day
   b. On the board, ask each person to name one or two activities and write a list. Try to come up with as many different situations or "triggers" as you can. Then explain the following:
      (1) "Human beings are creatures of habit. The more we do something over and over, the easier it is to do it. That includes both mental and physical activities. In order to make mantram repetition a part of your life, it has to become an "automatic" behavior. Reflect on how many times you do something (like brushing your teeth or getting in and out of the car) without ever thinking about it. In fact, at those moments your mind is usually somewhere else, but not in the present moment. Those transition times are excellent times to practice repeating the mantram."

Activity 6 — 15 minutes
DETACHED REFLECTION AND REDIRECTED DETERMINATION

Methods: Presentation

1. Another way to keep your practice going it to evaluate the benefits. Take a moment at the end of the day and with no judgment or self-criticism, evaluate how your day has gone. Have you been patient? Have you been focused? Have you been intentional? Have you made wise choices? "Break the connection between stimulus and reaction…once you have a measure of detachment, you can reply to criticism without identifying yourself with your opinions or the other person with [his/hers], choosing words that are kind, [neutral if not positive and honest]. The key is to have a choice" (*SITS*: p. 122).
2. We can't change our behavior unless we are aware of <u>what</u> needs changing. So by taking a moment for "detached" reflection, we can evaluate what we liked and didn't like about our choices each day.

   Please provide participants with clear examples of being non-judgmental. An example could be: "My son asked me a question when I was reading the paper and instead of facing him and answering his question I continued to read the paper, I looked at him without responding. Of course he continued to nag at me until I answered his question." Was my first response effective? Could I have done something different? Your assignment for next week is to take 5 minutes at the end of each day and ask the following questions regarding your mantram practice:
   a. What did I do well?
   b. What areas can I improve upon?
   c. Could I have used my mantram and reacted differently?
3. NEXT week, please share with the group what you discover about your daily evaluation. Be prepared to share in class.
4. Don't dwell on your shortcomings or mistakes, but rather take that energy and "RE-DIRECT" it toward a great "DETERMINATION" to change.

Activity 7 — 5 minutes
MANTRAM WRITING

Method: Group Exercise

Sit together and write mantram for 3 minutes.

Activity 8 — 5 minutes
CLOSING, HOMEWORK AND EXPERIMENTS

Review:

- Strategies for dealing with unhealthy habits
- How to make mantram a part of your life
- Detached reflection and redirected determination – reflecting on your day without judgment and see if mantram could have been used, then make a plan for redirected determination

1. Continue using the mantram, writing the mantram, practicing one-pointedness, and slowing down
2. Continue to track mantram use (Optional)
3. Identify situations or events in your life where you can be more intentional and make wise choices
4. Each night before bed, take a moment and reflect on your day. Observe your successes and failures without judgment, but with curiosity. Choose one thing you plan to improve on the next day. Be prepared to share at the next group meeting.
5. Read Chapter 8 in the course manual

Class 8: Putting it All Together

Purpose

- To understand how mantram repetition, one-pointed attention, and slowing down complement each other for stress management
- To identify likes and dislikes, or things we cannot change, and how to use the mantram to neutralize our preferences and decrease our negative reactions
- To identify the people, events, and activities that vitalizes and drains our energy
- To understand how we cannot always change outward circumstances, but we can *always* change our reactions to them

Objectives

By the end of this session, the group members will be able to:

1. Explain how mantram repetition, one-pointed attention, and slowing down complement each other
2. Identify how our likes and dislikes can drain energy or conserve energy
3. Understand how mantram repetition can neutralize our negative reactions to circumstances we dislike, and how this conserves valuable energy resources

Materials

- Nametags and markers

Agenda

(*Post this agenda at the beginning of class)*

Activity 1: Mantram, One-Pointed, or Slowing Down Storytelling: Questions & Answers
Activity 2: Reflection and Redirected Determination Exercise (from last week)
Activity 3: Mantram Practice in Class
Activity 4: Vitality Exercise – Overcoming Rigidity
Activity 5: How to "Keep it Going"— Information on Refreshers or Follow up
Activity 6: Mantram Writing (Optional)
Activity 7: Review the Situations, Symptoms or Behaviors (p. 11)
Activity 8: Closing and Course Evaluations

Activity 1 — 10 minutes

MANTRAM, ONE-POINTED, OR SLOWING DOWN STORYTELLING: QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Methods: Group Discussion

TURN ON TAPE RECORDER

1. Ask for experiences of repeating the mantram, one-pointed attention, or slowing down and how they complement each other
2. Facilitate storytelling (by giving an example yourself)
3. Questions and answers regarding technique and practice

Activity 2 — 10 minutes

REFLECTION & REDIRECTED DETERMINATION ASSIGNMENT

Method: Group Discussion

1. Ask (each) individual to report on their "DETACHED REFLECTION AND REDIRECTED DETERMINATION" exercise from last week:
   a. What did they observe about their practice? Were they able to make changes and pick one small thing to work on?
   b. Highlight the benefits of the program and emphasize that changes are sometimes hard to notice. Ask if anyone in their life has noticed that they are calmer or "different" in any way since using mantram repetition and allied tools?
2. Discuss ways of "Making Mantram Repetition a Part of Your Life:"
   a. Ask for examples of how people have incorporated mantram repetition into daily activity
   b. Share stories and give each an opportunity to reflect on the 8-week course

Activity 3 — 5 minutes

MANTRAM PRACTICE IN CLASS

Method: Group Exercise

Sit together for 5 minutes repeating mantram, silently with eyes closed (or not).

Activity 4 — 20 minutes

VITALITY EXERCISE – OVERCOMING RIGIDITY

Method: Group Exercise – Ask different participants to read a paragraph starting p. 58 and end on p. 59 before doing vitality exercise.

Start by drawing a graph on the board like this:

LIKES – INCREASES VITALITY	DISLIKES – DRAINS VITALITY

1. Think first, of situations or events that you DISLIKE.
   a. [Have each person think of something and share ONE thing that you can write in the column under DISLIKES.]
2. Now think of those situations or events that you LIKE.
   a. [Ask each person to share ONE thing that they like. Note, sometimes the same thing can be written on BOTH sides]
3. Now, look at the DISLIKES list and identify or CIRCLE ALL the things that people have NO control over (i.e., rude people, bad traffic, environmental noise or toxins, waiting in line, deadlines, etc.).
4. Now, look at the LIKES list and notice all the things that people DO have control over (i.e., hobbies, quality time with people, good food or vacation, etc.)
5. Explain the following:
   "We don't have CONTROL over many things in life, yet we spend a lot of energy trying to avoid our 'dislikes' and move closer toward our 'likes.' *The goal of this program* is teach you some tools like mantram repetition, that can help 'neutralize' reactions, or dislikes about the things we don't have control over. By doing this, we conserve our energy for the things we LIKE! Look at your life and all of the things and circumstances that you have no control over, and yet, you get frustrated or upset by them." ("The mantram brings an angry mind back under control, so that we can be more patient, more constructive." Learn how to live in freedom instead of simply reacting to what others say and do or what happens such as heavy traffic, being honked at, etc. [SITS, p. 119])

   BOTTOM LINE: The only thing we really have control over is our REACTION. We can't control the events and circumstances outside of ourselves, but WE CAN ALWAYS CONTROL OUR REACTIONS TO THEM. Consider learning to "let go" of your frustration and accept the situation, by using your mantram.

Activity 5 — 15 minutes
HOW TO KEEP IT GOING – INFORMATION ON REFRESHERS OR FOLLOW UP

Methods: Class Discussion

NOTE: If there are refresher courses or any types of follow up - this is the time to address them.

1. Explain that mantram repetition, one-pointed attention, and slowing down are 3 out of 8 tools taught by Eknath Easwaran, a meditation teacher at the Blue Mountain Center of Meditation. If people want to deepen their spiritual practice, we recommend they visit the Web site, sign up for the free newsletter, and find other books by Easwaran. The overview of his program is found in the book, *Passage Meditation*, Nilgiri Press.

   If people ask about the 8 tools, they are:
   1. Passage meditation
   2. Mantram repetition
   3. One-pointed attention
   4. Slowing down
   5. Training the senses
   6. Putting others first
   7. Spiritual reading
   8. Spiritual fellowship (satsang)

2. Direct people to the Blue Mountain Center of Meditation Web site for more information: www.easwaran.org

Activity 6 — 5 minutes
MANTRAM WRITING (Optional)

Method: Group Exercise

Sit together and write mantram for 3 minutes.

Activity 7 — 10 minutes
REVIEW SITUATIONS, SYMPTOMS OR BEHAVIORS (P. 11)

Method: Group Exercise

1 Ask participants to return to p. 11 of the course manual and reflect on these
2. Ask participants to share any successes or areas they'd like help with
3. Remind them to incorporate these goals in their plan for continued mantram use

Activity 8 — 10 minutes
CLOSING AND COURSE EVALUATIONS

Method: Group Exercise

Review:

- Living completely in the present is also the most joyful way to be free from worry and anxiety
- Be one-pointed
- Slow down not only in action but in thoughts
- Repeating your mantram
  a. When you need it
  b. When you DON'T need it

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